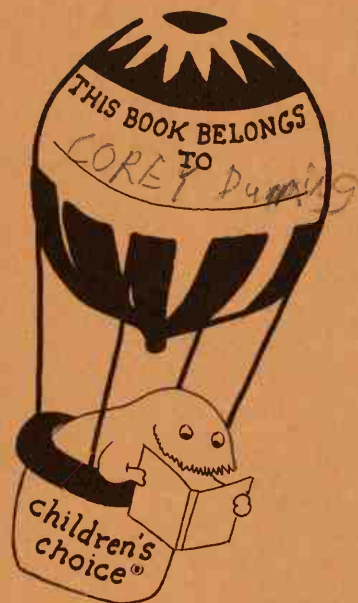


# RANDY'S DANDY LIONS

BILL PEET



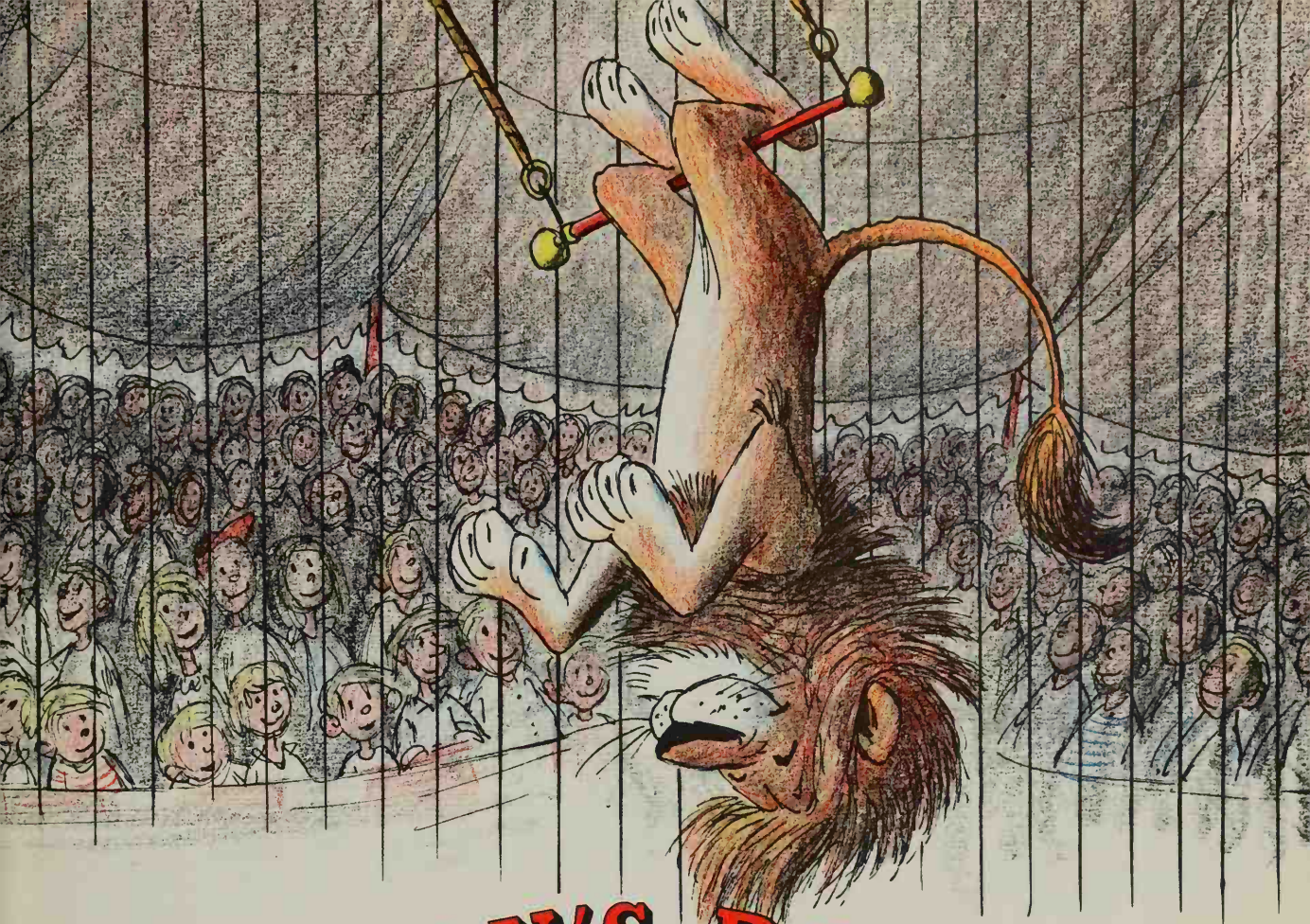












# RANDY'S DANDY LIONS

*written and illustrated by* BILL PEET

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY BOSTON

A Children's Choice® Book Club Edition From Scholastic Book Services



To my wife MARGARET and my sons BILL and STEVE

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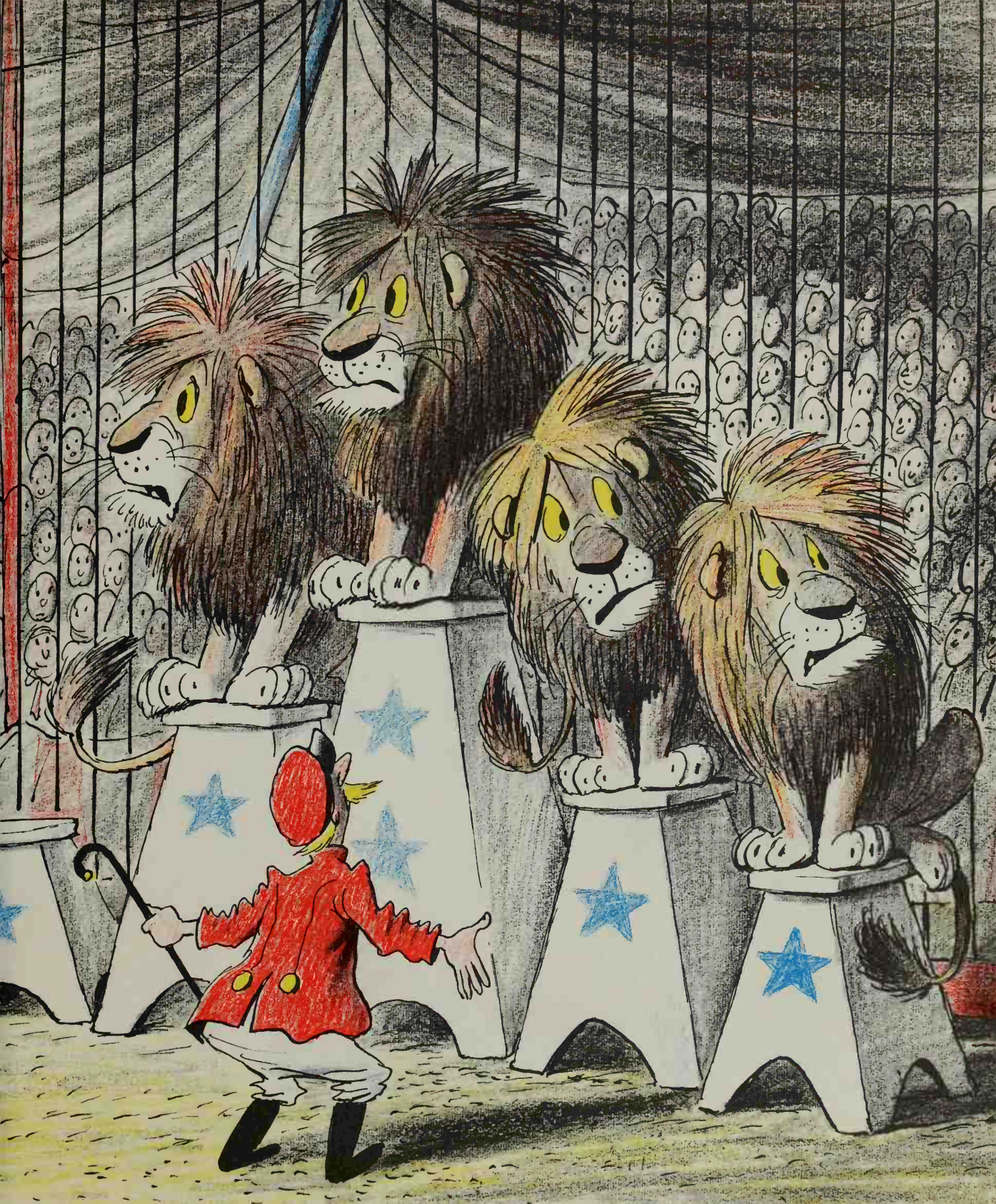
A fine lion tamer named Randy Monroe  
Performed for a circus a long time ago  
And the five big shaggy-maned lions of Randy's  
Were billed in the show as the five fancy dandies.  
But strangely enough very few people knew  
What fantastic tricks the five lions could do  
Because they were timid and suffered from cage fright  
The same kind of fear that an actor calls stage fright.



When the circus began and the big top was packed  
And they came out with Randy to put on their act,  
The lions forgot about doing their stunts.  
With a tent full of people all staring at once  
They suddenly froze, couldn't budge from their places  
With baffled and terrified looks on their faces  
All except Dudley the bravest of all  
Who had just enough courage to stand on a ball  
So the act was a flop and the crowd became rude.  
They all stamped their feet, while they hissed and they booed.









One night Colonel Bowers the circus's boss  
Complained to poor Randy his act was a loss.  
"What you need is a whip because once they get whacked  
Those lions will soon put some life in their act."  
"Oh, no," Randy pleaded, "I wouldn't dare beat them.  
They're my very best friends, so I couldn't mistreat them."  
"Well, we can't sell the lions," growled old Colonel Bowers.  
"Used lions aren't worth much, especially ours.  
We are stuck with these moth-eaten lions," he said,  
"So we'll hire a new lion-tamer instead."





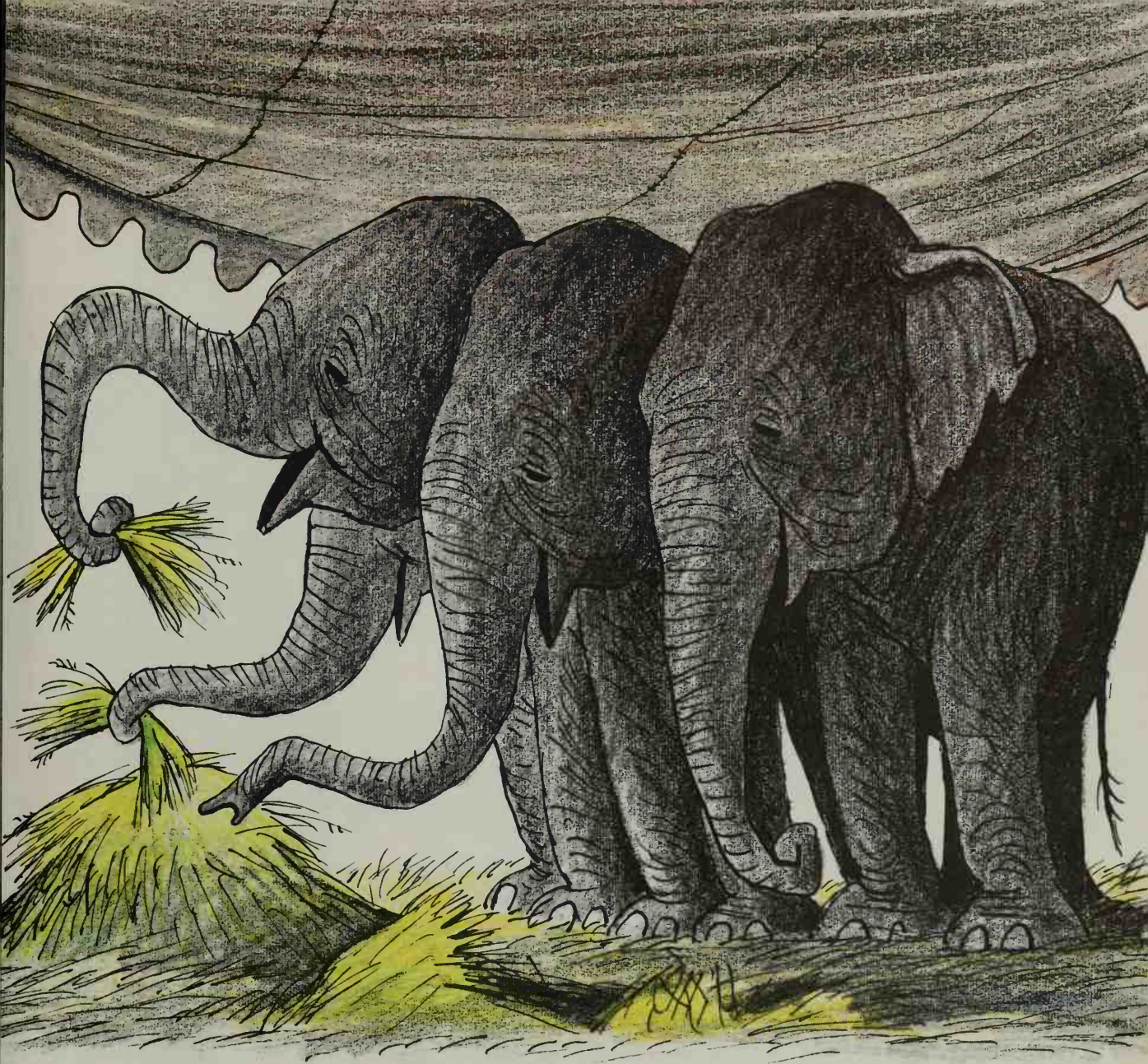






Poor Randy began his new job the next day  
The biggest of all in the show, in a way.  
He was handed a ladder along with a broom





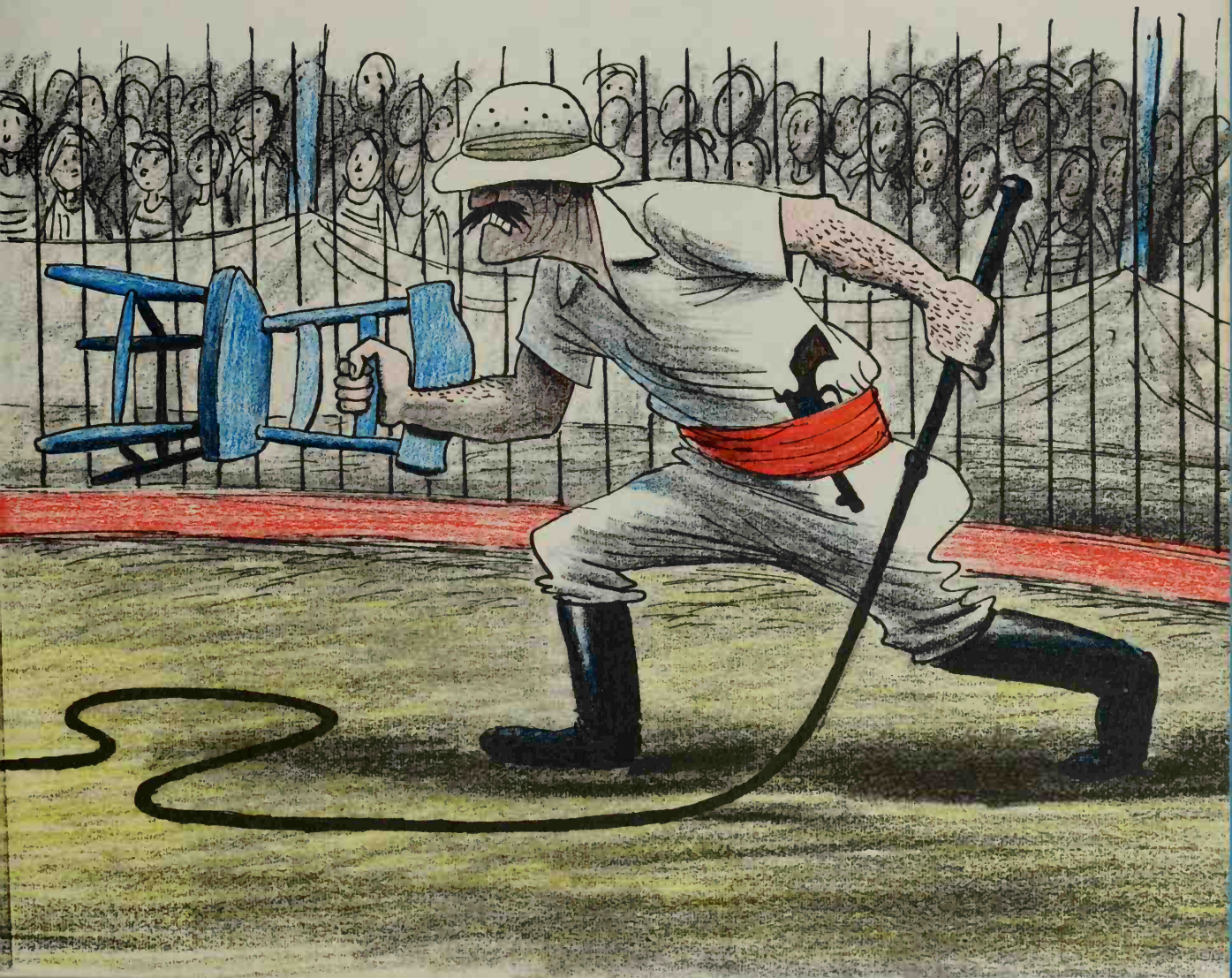
And sent off to work as an elephant groom.  
He swept all the dust off the elephants' hides  
Behind their big ears, off their backs and both sides.





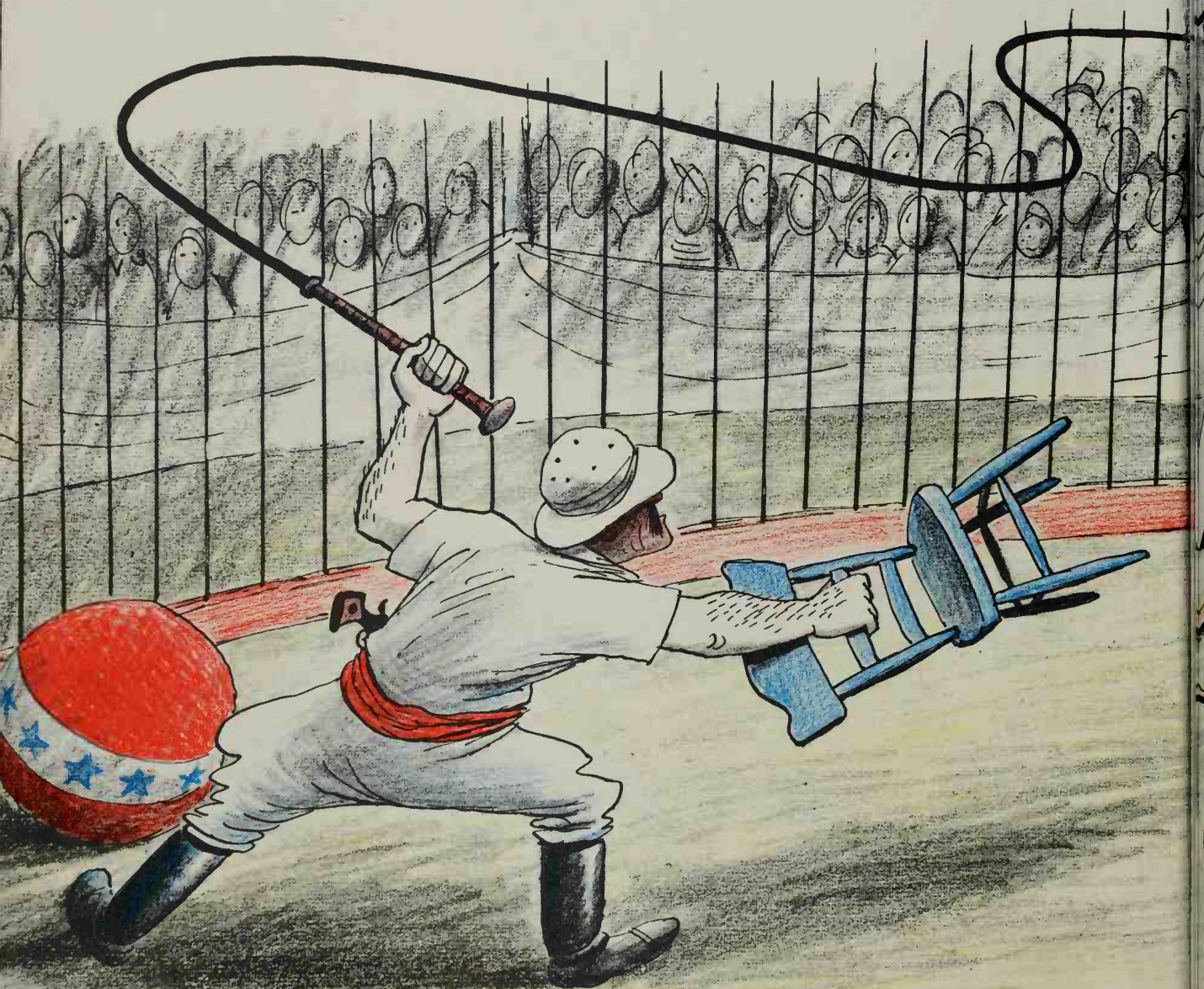


When the lions came into the big cage that night  
They were stopped in their tracks by a horrible sight,  
A powerful man with a fierce black mustache  
Wearing a helmet and fiery red sash.  
He was armed with a chair and a pistol and whip  
A long snaky whip with a sting on the tip.





When he cracked his long whip, they were so terrified  
That they frantically tried to find somewhere to hide  
But hiding was useless the lions discovered.  
Try as they might they left some part uncovered  
And the cruel cracking whip lashed out through the air  
Snapping off whiskers and large tufts of hair.





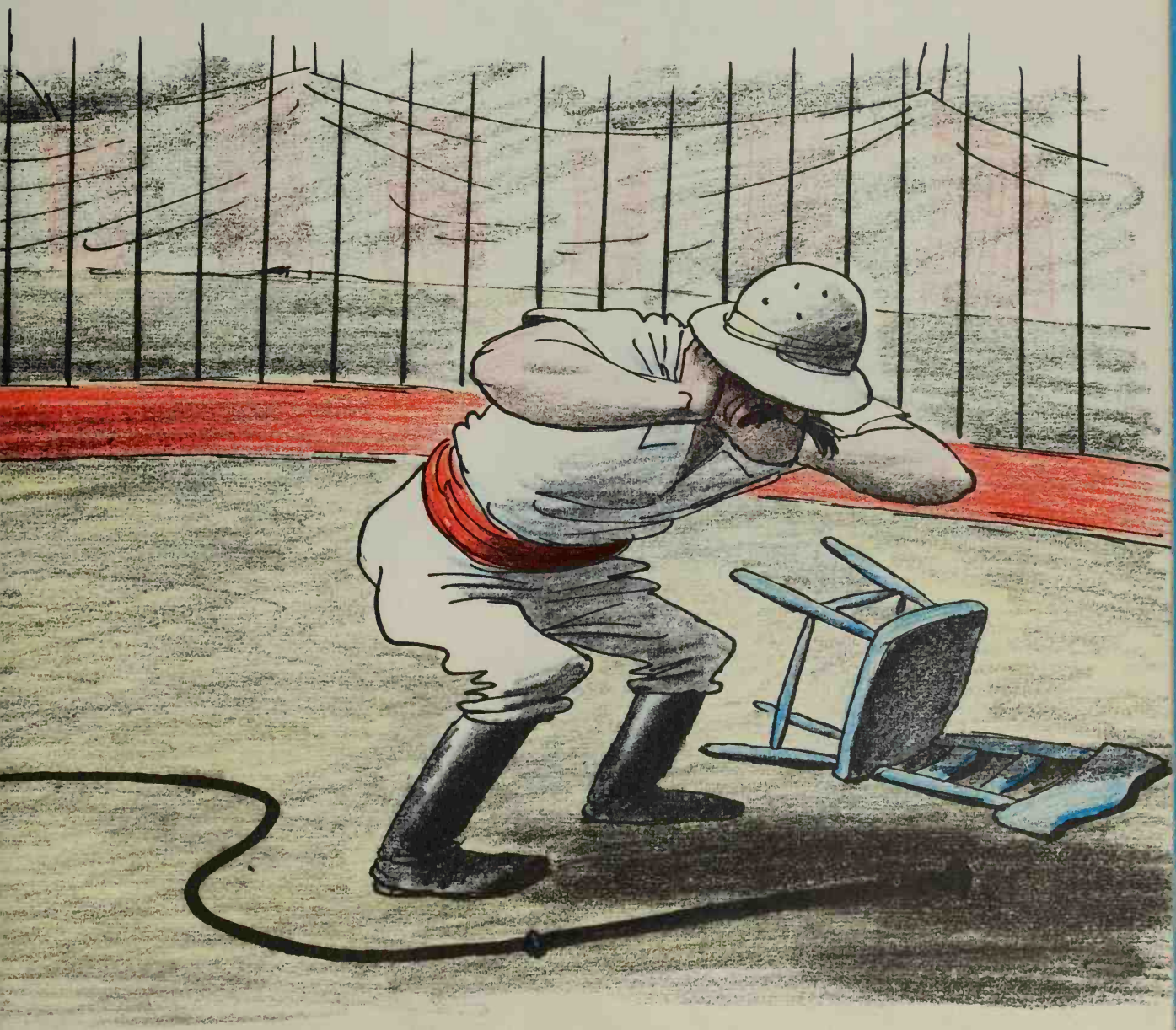








At last they just couldn't stand any more  
And in desperation they started to roar,  
Like a deep rolling rumble of thunder it went  
Up from the ground to the top of the tent.

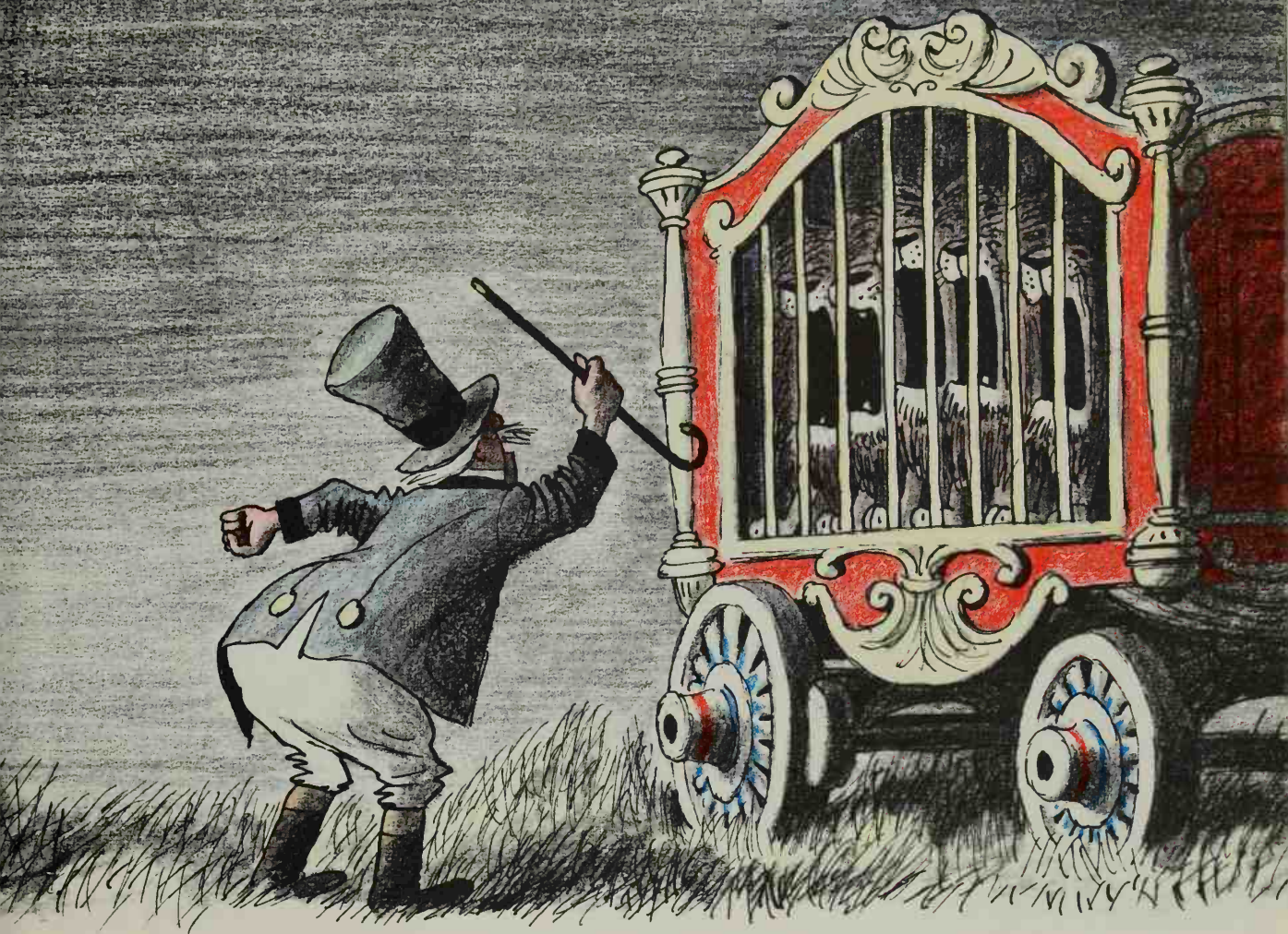






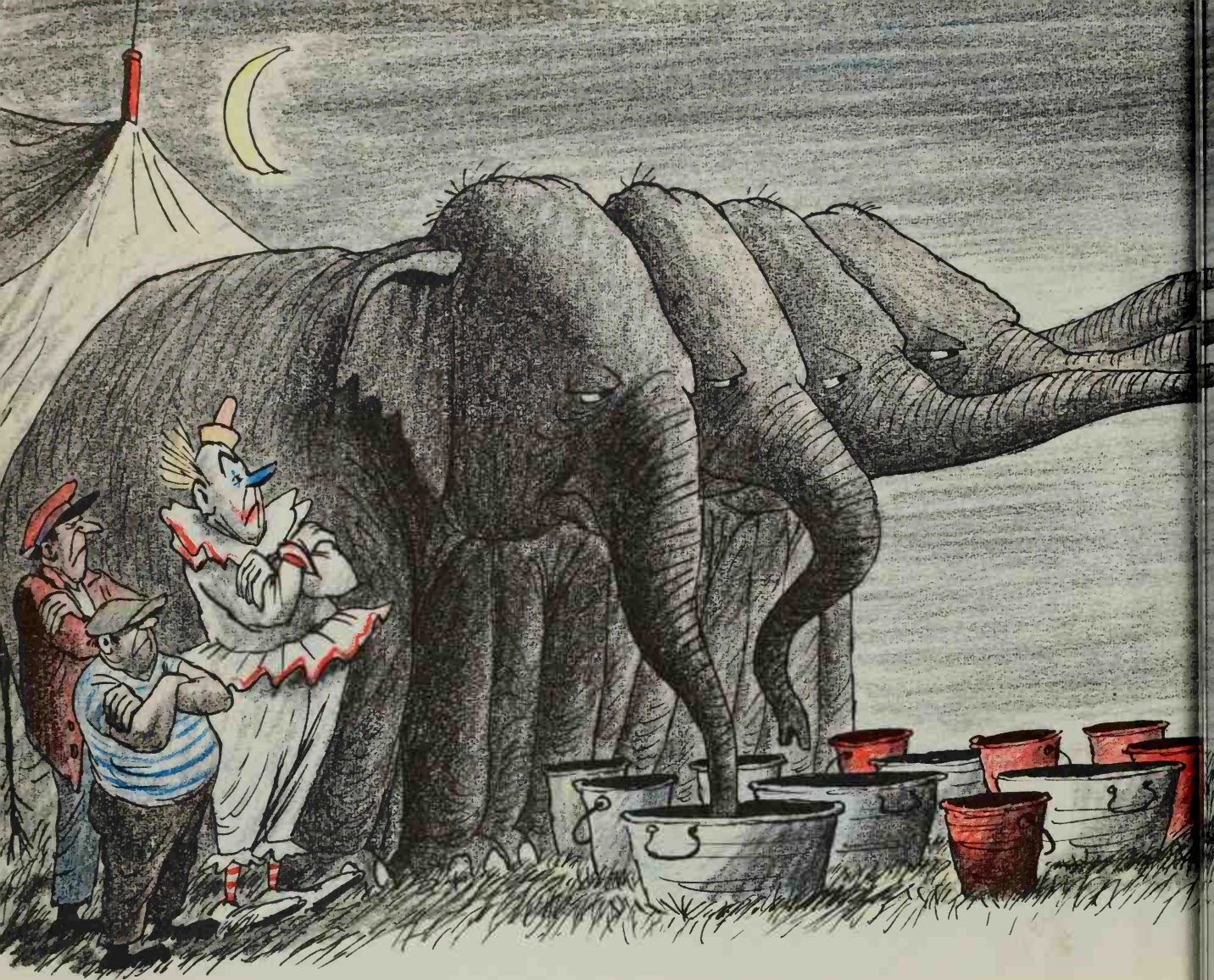
When they returned to their wagon that night  
They were still so upset from their horrible fright,  
That they couldn't stop roaring, they kept on and on  
Long after the show when the people had gone.  
"That's enough," cried the Colonel, "now you'd better be quiet!"





Or I'll soon put you all on a head-lettuce diet!  
And if that doesn't fix you then I'll tell you what,  
I'll tie all your tails in a triple square knot!"  
But the worst things the old Colonel threatened to do  
Couldn't scare them one bit after what they'd been through.





“I know,” said a clown, “what’ll stop them I’ll bet.  
We’ll douse them with water, lions hate to get wet.  
Let’s fill all the buckets and tubs we can find  
Then call out the elephants. They’ll make them mind.”





Using their trunks just like fire hoses,  
They aimed at the lions, right straight at their noses.  
They drenched them until the poor beasts were half drowned  
And for a few minutes there wasn't a sound.

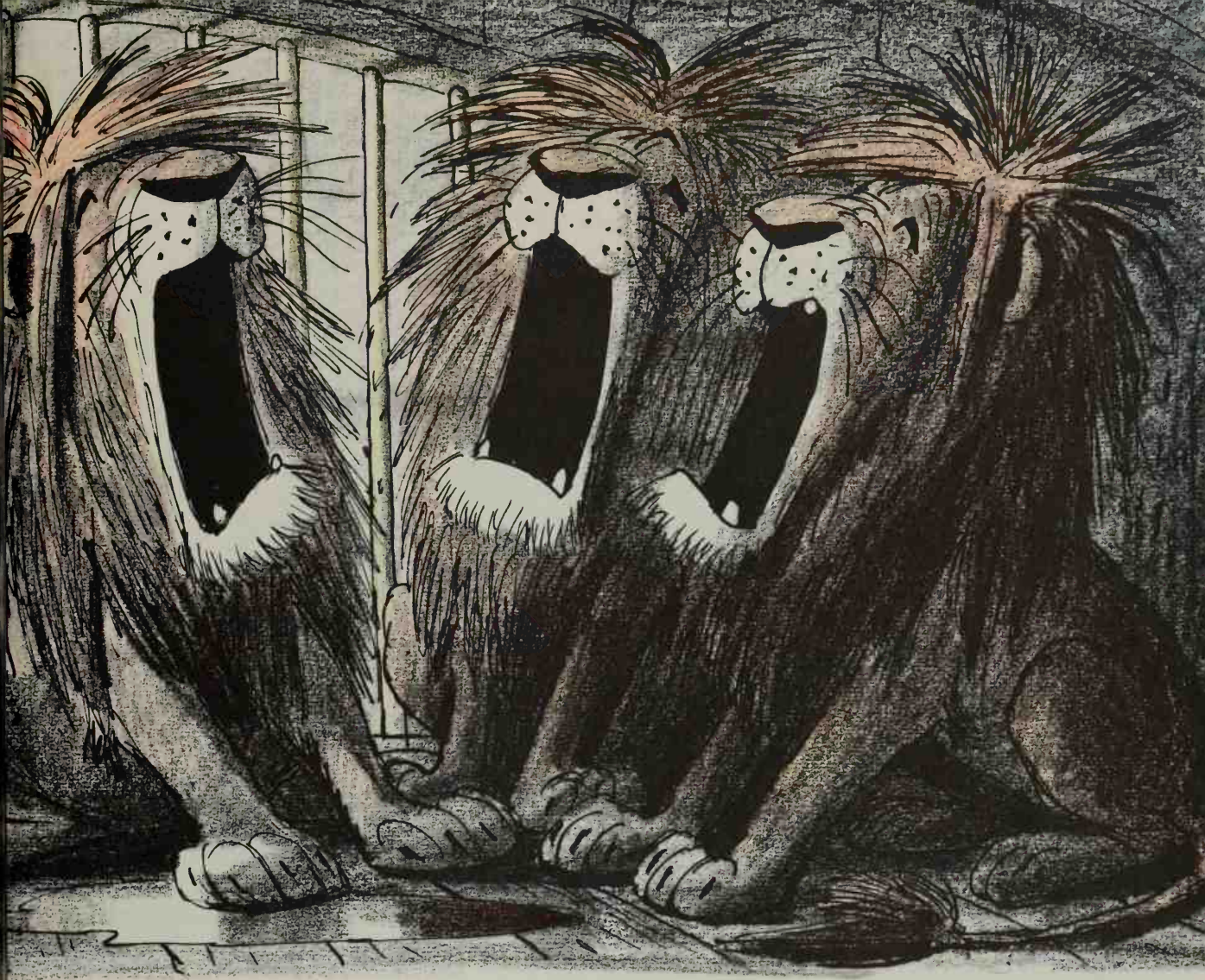




Then they soon caught their breaths and started once more  
To roar even louder than ever before.

“Let’s all go to bed,” grumbled old Colonel Bowers,  
“They’ll run out of roars in a couple of hours.”





But as it so happened the Colonel was wrong  
The lions continued to roar all night long  
So loud and so deep that it made the ground shake  
And kept everyone in the circus awake.





But they couldn't keep roaring forever, of course,  
And little by little the lions grew hoarse.

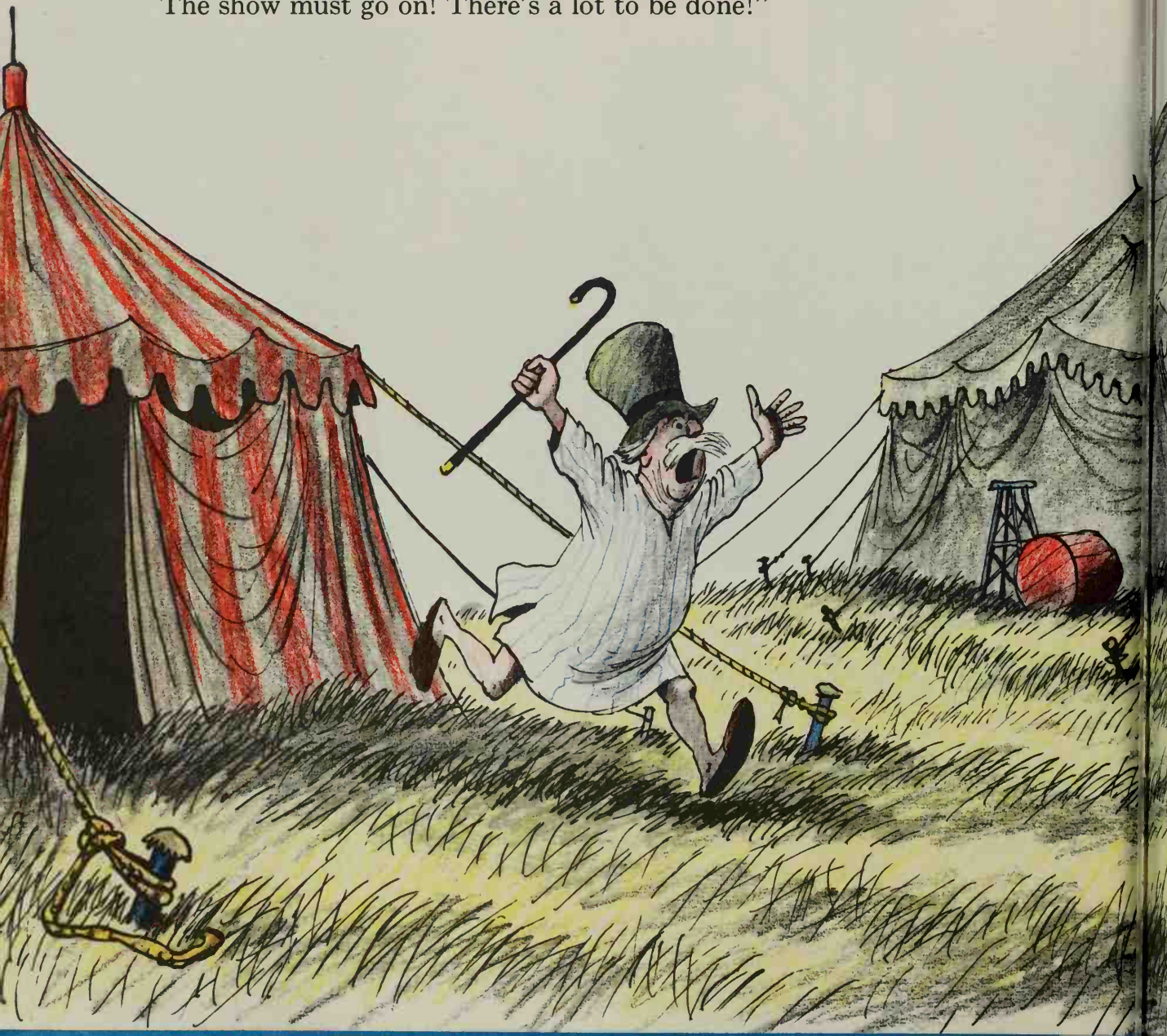




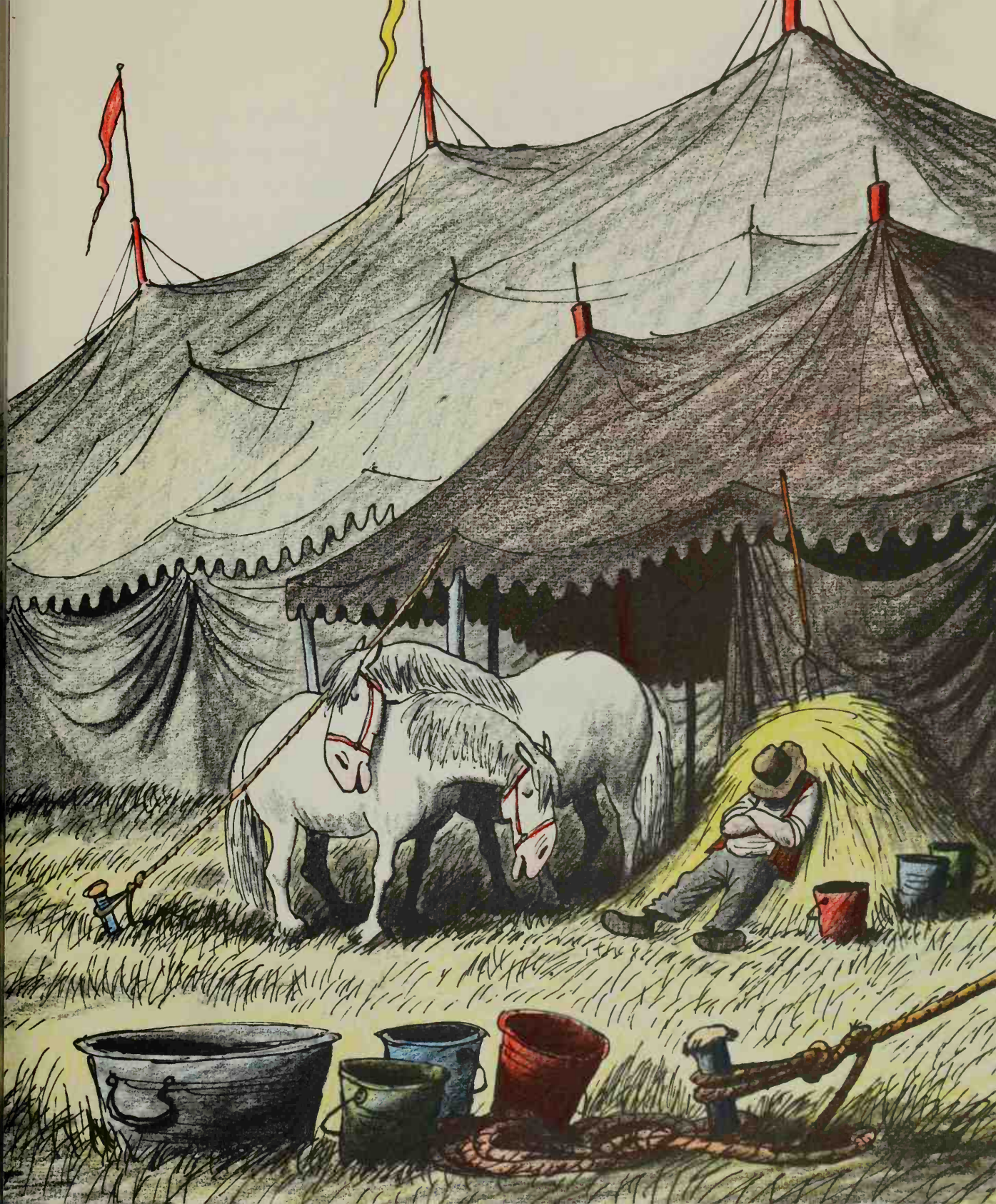
At six in the morning they fell off to sleep  
On the floor of their cage in a big tousled heap.



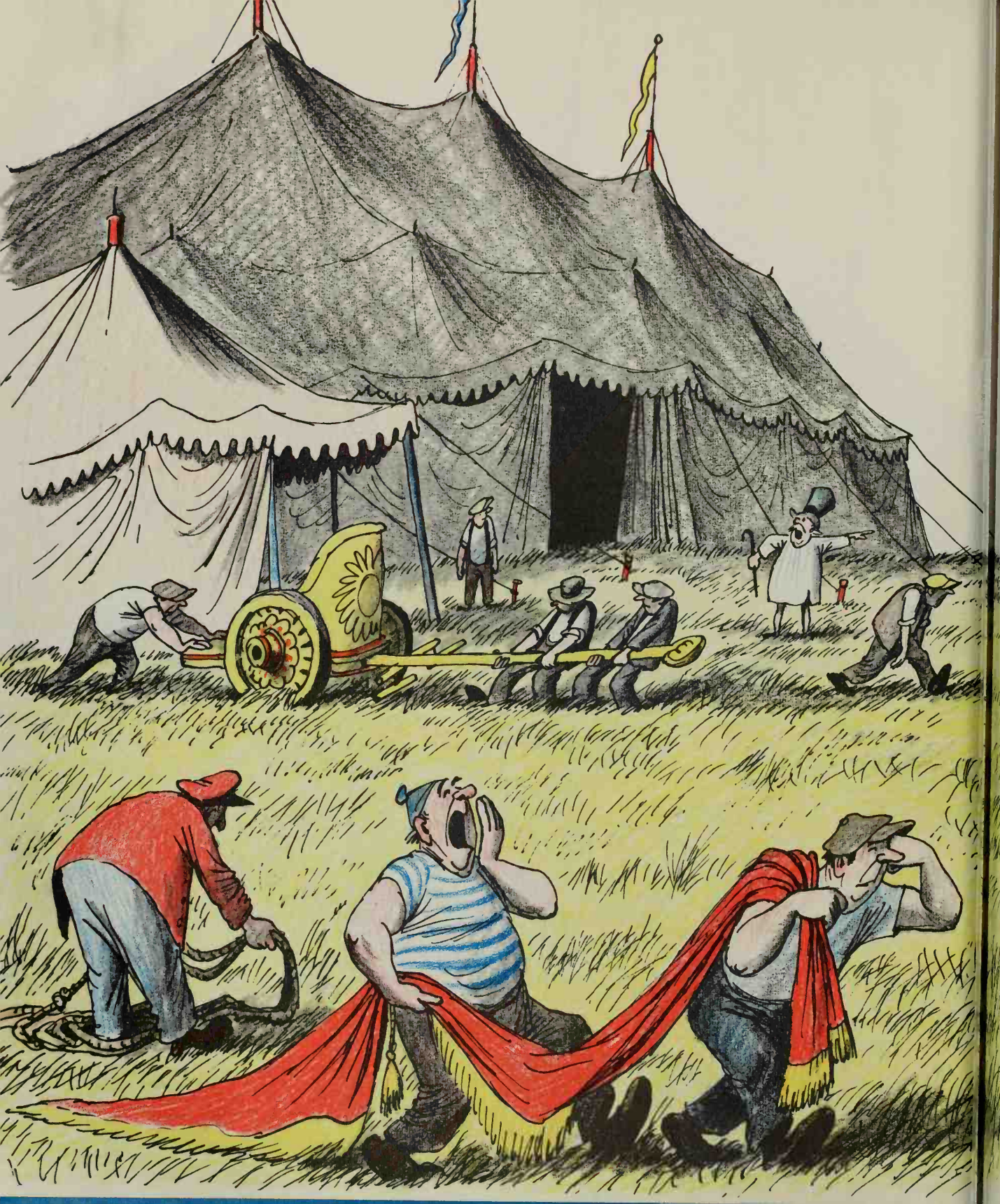
When the Colonel woke up it was already noon  
And the one o'clock show must be set to go soon.  
He couldn't get dressed, there was no time for that,  
So he rushed from his tent in his nightshirt and hat.  
"Wake up now!" he shouted. "On your feet everyone!  
The show must go on! There's a lot to be done!"











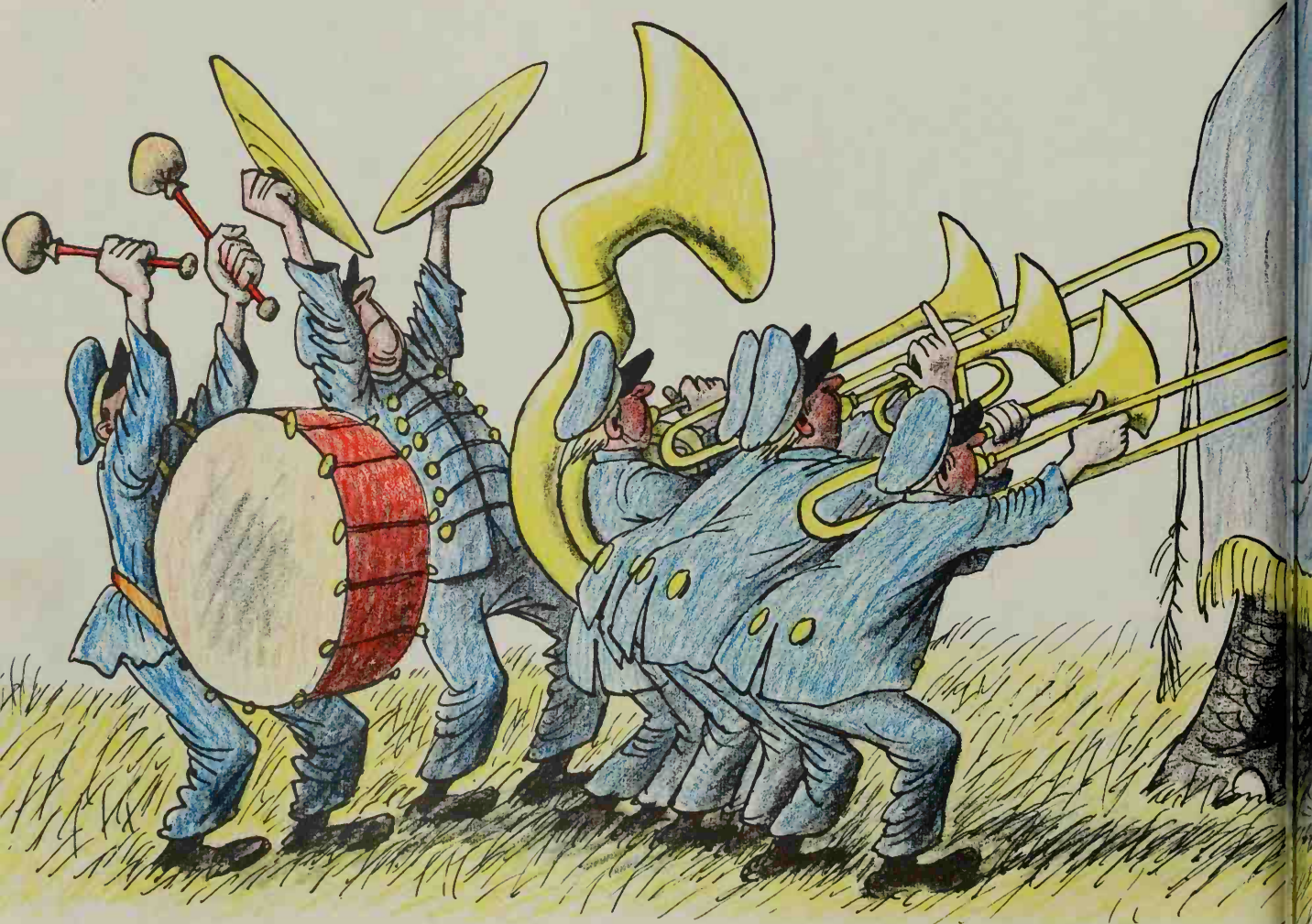


Soon all the roustabouts swarmed from their tent  
Yawning and rubbing their eyes as they went  
In a hurry to make up the time they had lost  
And get the show ready to go at all cost  
But all the confusion and rushing about  
Was entirely for nothing it finally turned out.

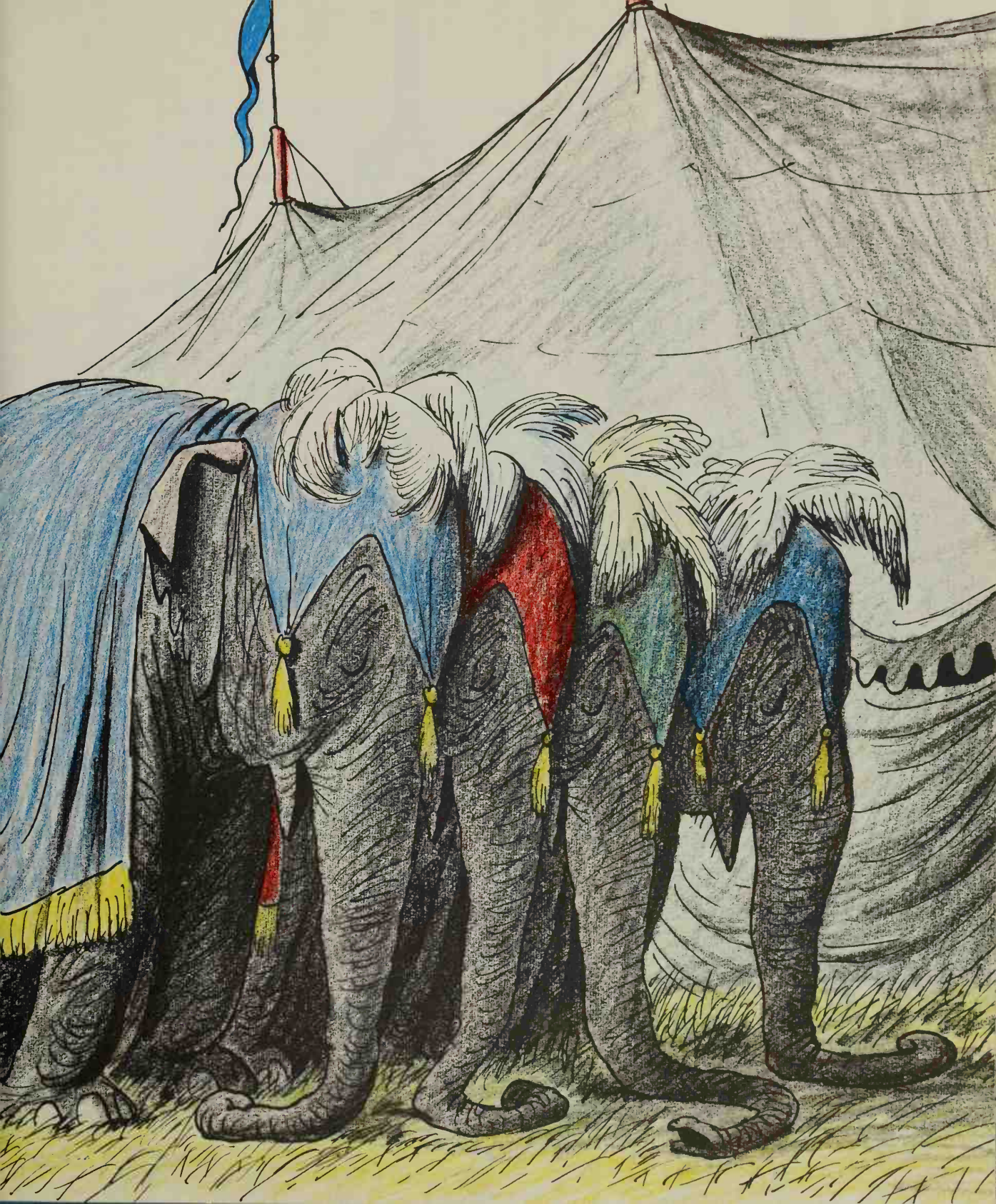




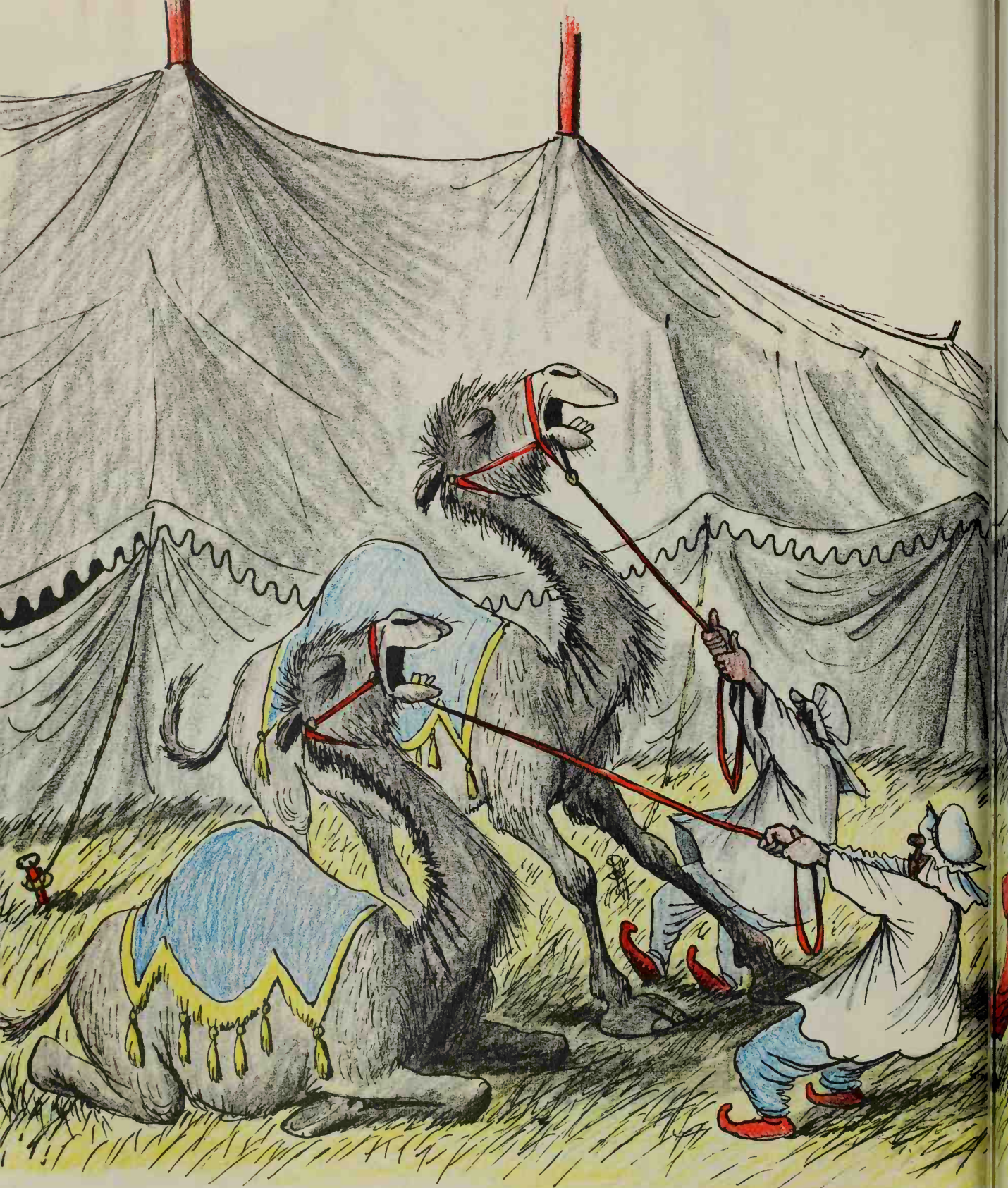
As the grand procession approached the big top,  
The elephants suddenly came to a stop  
They had fallen asleep right there in their tracks  
Just as limp and as saggy as old gunny sacks.  
They couldn't go on, and no one could make them,  
Even the loud circus band couldn't wake them.













The camels were always bad tempered and rude  
And a night without sleep hadn't helped their mean mood.  
They wailed and they moaned and they loudly complained  
Then sat down on their haunches and there they remained.  
The zebras were mulish, they kicked up their heels  
And knocked off their fancy gold chariot's wheels.









The poor clowns were just barely able to wake up  
And put on their costumes, their noses and makeup  
But they were too drowsy to hold up their heads  
They finally gave up and flopped down on their beds.

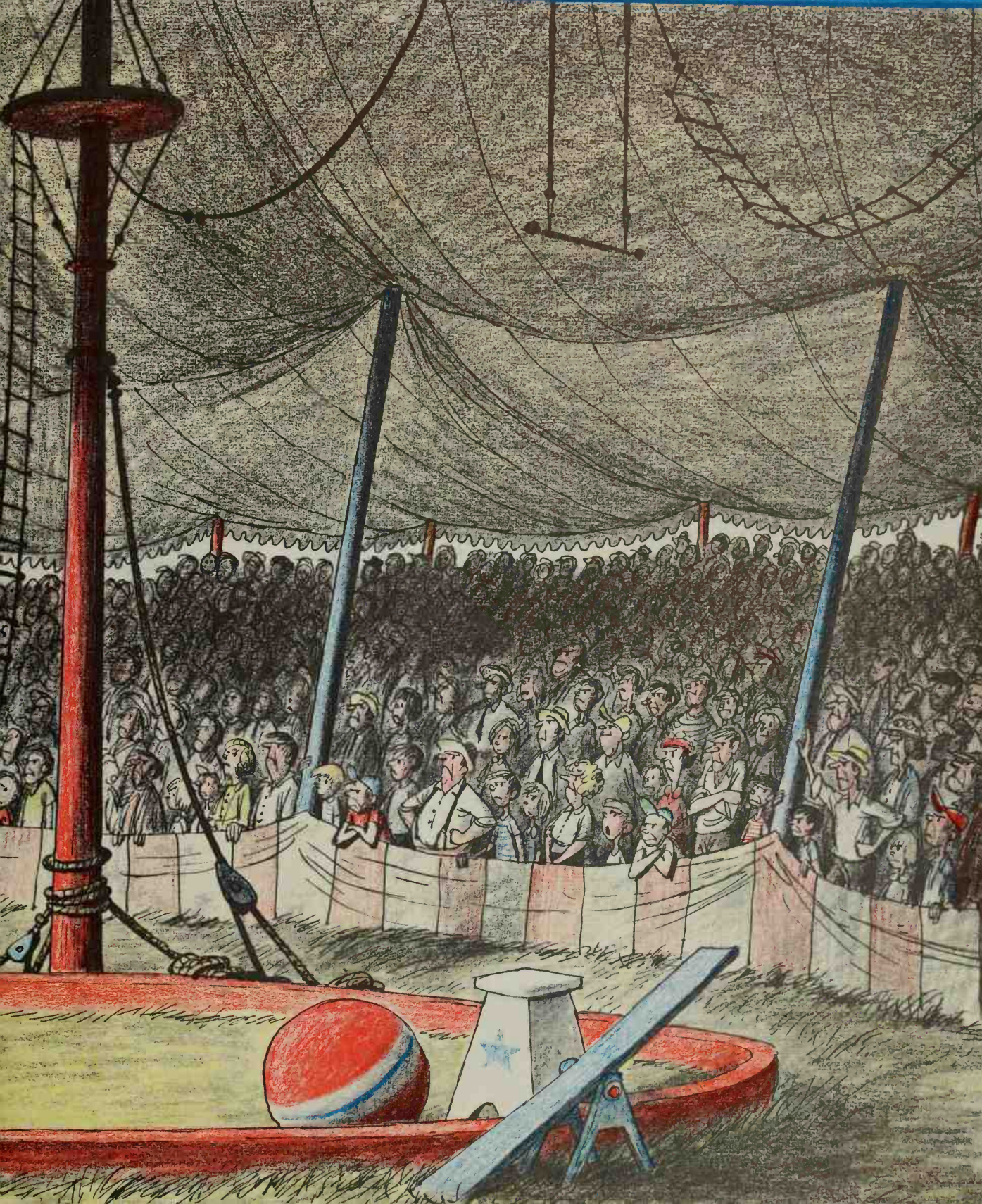




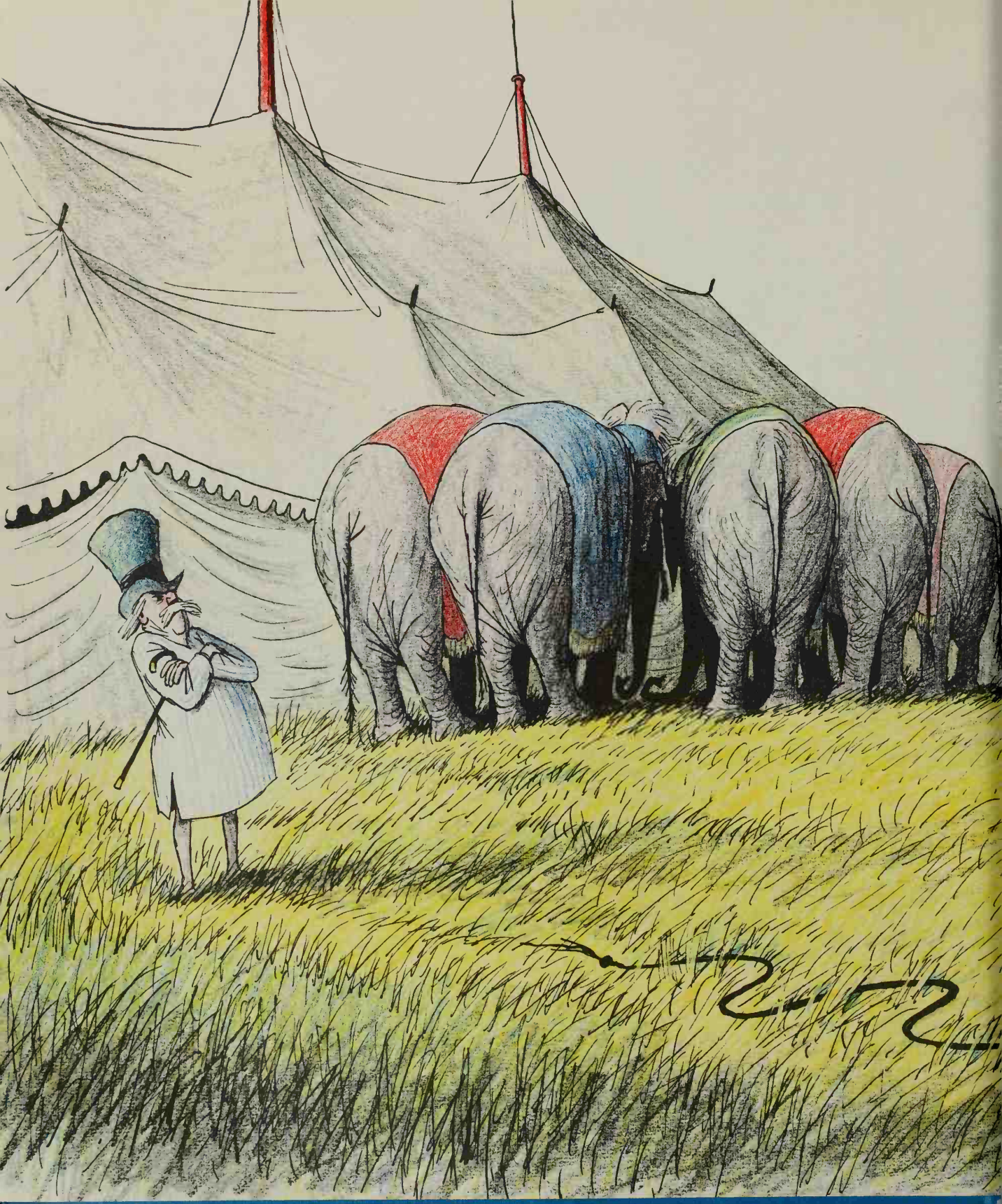
It was useless to try and get things underway  
So the Colonel decided to call it a day.  
And he went in the big top to do some explaining  
To the crowd which by this time had started complaining.  
“I’m terribly sorry,” he said with a yawn,  
“We’re all much too sleepy, the show can’t go on.  
I’ll return all your money, yes, every last cent  
If you’ll meet me outside right in front of the tent.”













However, before Colonel Bowers retired  
He fired the new lion-tamer he'd hired  
And the frightening fellow walked off in a huff  
With his whip and his chair and the rest of his stuff.







Then he went to the lions and gave each a poke  
With the end of his cane and they slowly awoke.  
“Now look here,” he said, “I am not a mean man

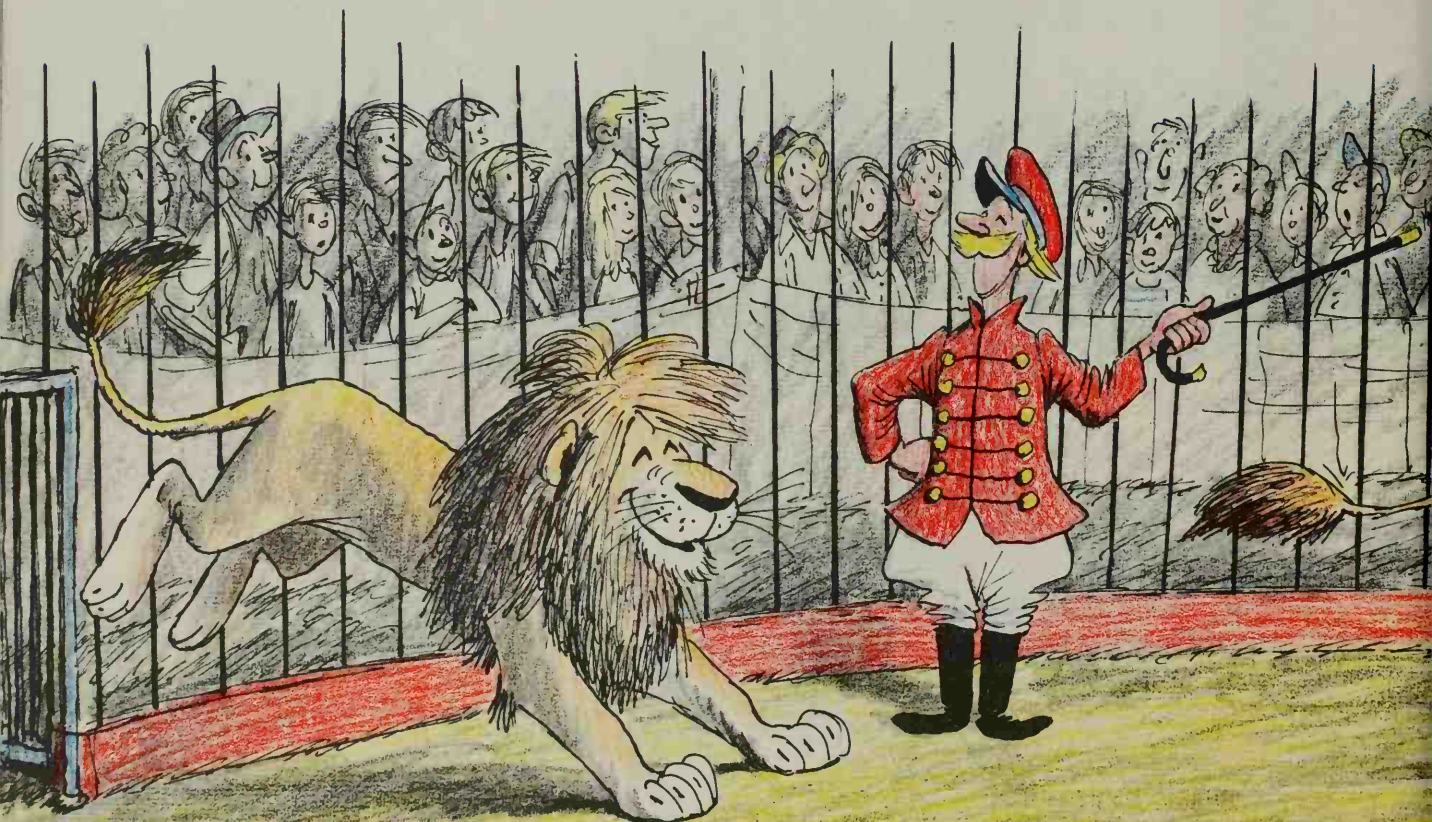




So I'll try to be just as fair as I can.  
You'll get one more chance. If you fail to come through,  
I'll haul every one of you off to the zoo!"



And that one more chance was all that they needed  
For Randy's five lions at last had succeeded  
In overcoming their case of cage fright  
For nothing could frighten them after that night.  
When they entered the cage you could tell by their faces  
They were eager and ready to go through their paces.



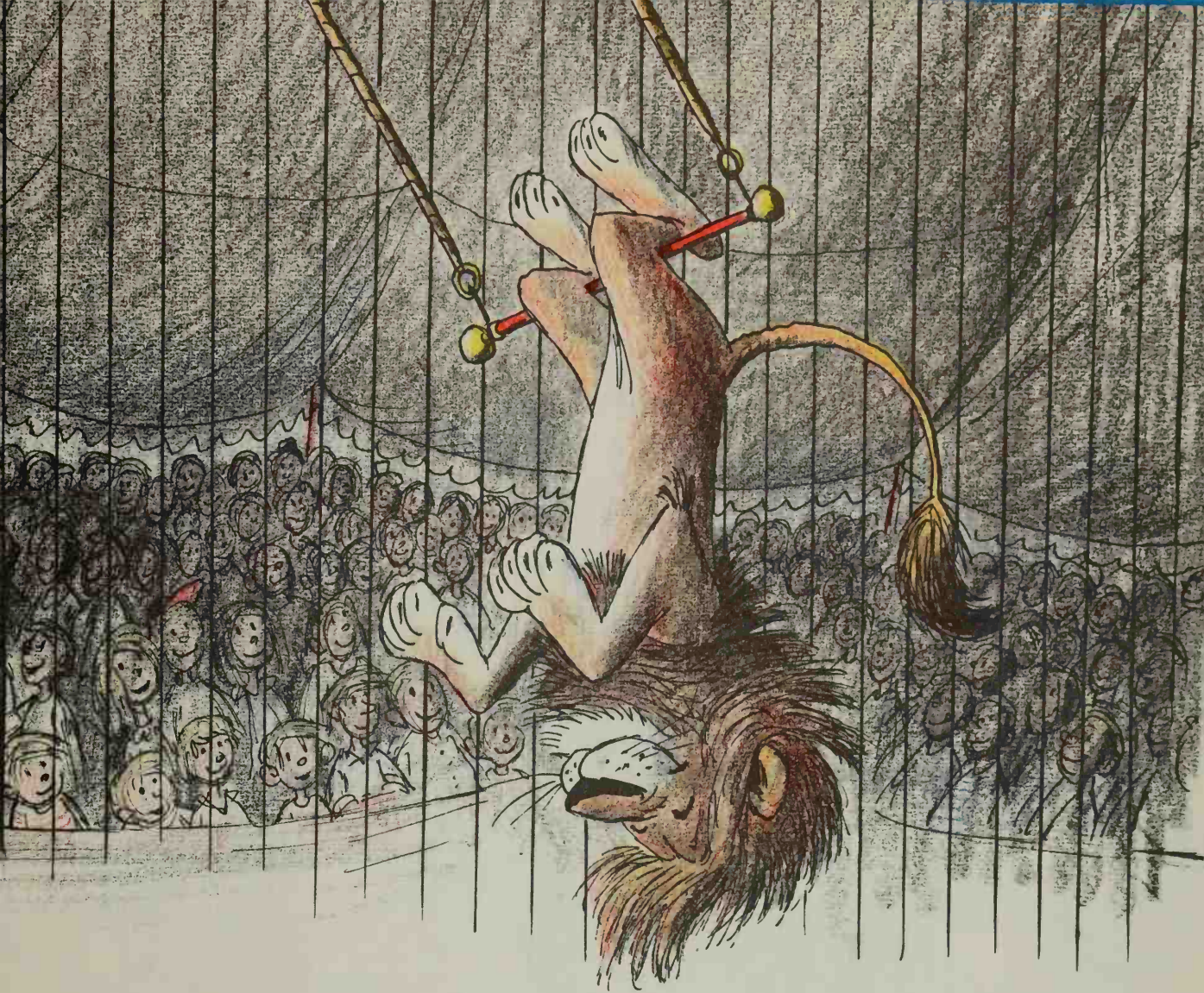












First Buford went bouncing around in the ring  
With his tail curled up under him just like a spring  
And Sam rode a cycle with only one wheel  
While he balanced a ball on his nose like a seal.  
Dudley hung by his heels from a flying trapeze  
Where he swung to and fro with the greatest of ease.



Dudley and Melvin teamed up in some stunts.  
They leaped through a hoop, that is both at once.  
This trick was most often a matter of luck  
Two times out of three they ended up stuck  
But the routine which called for the most skill was Milt's  
He walked all about on a tall pair of stilts.













To top their performance the last thing they did  
Was to balance themselves in a grand pyramid  
So very precise and so very exact  
That one slip of a paw could upset the whole act.  
Or even a sneeze could cause them to fall  
And then down came Randy, lions and all  
But in spite of these mishaps, they caused a sensation  
The crowd cheered them on with a rousing ovation.







When the circus was over they all went to sleep  
With big smiles on their faces in one shaggy heap  
For their fear of big crowds was a thing of the past.  
Randy's five dandy lions were happy at last.









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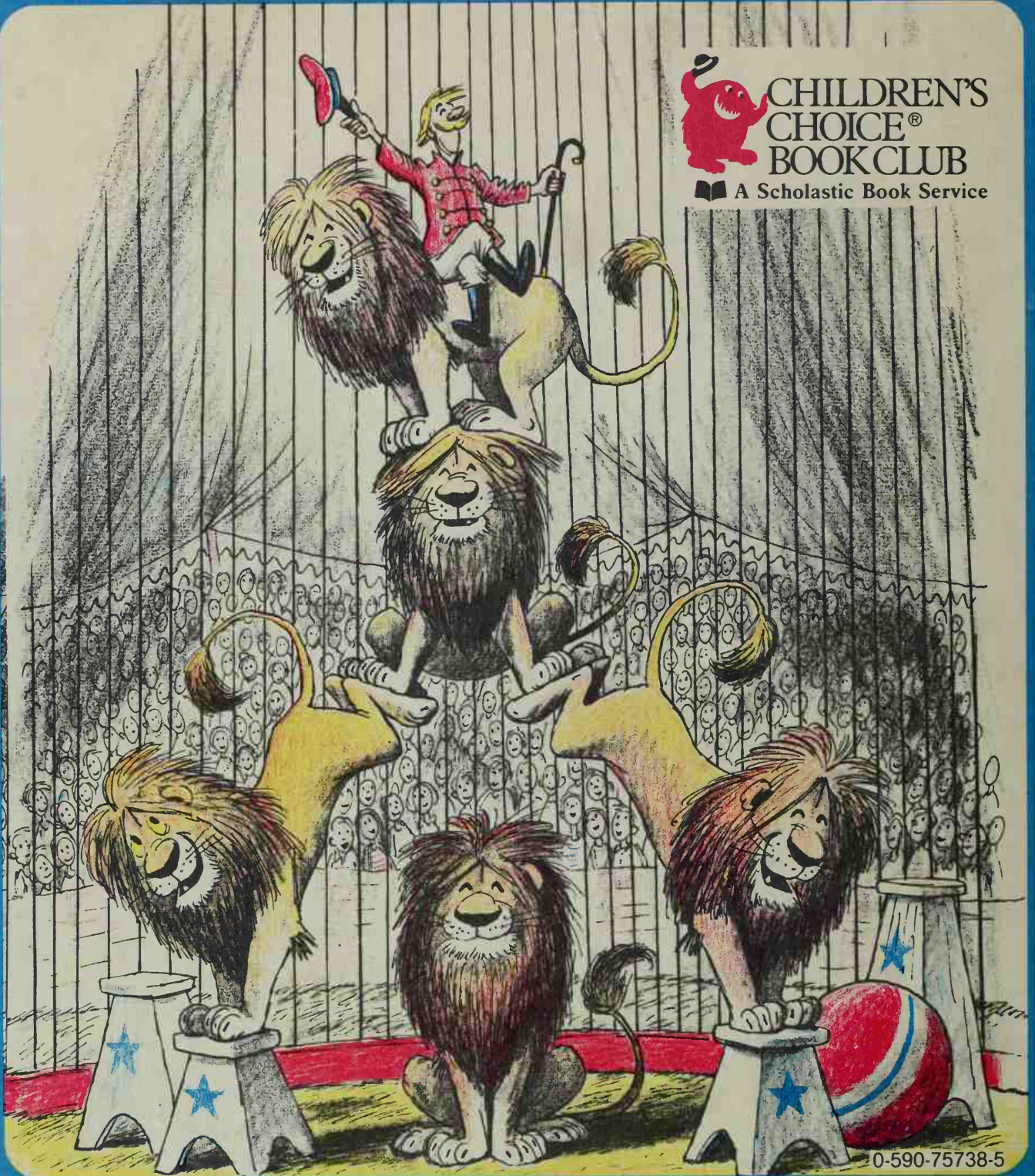






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